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Chairman:	Mr. MROZIEWICZ	(Poland)
later:	Mr. ALPMAN (Vice-Chairman)	(Turkey)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

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GENERAL DEBATE ON ALL DISARMAMENT ITEMS

Mr. AL-NASSER (Qatar) (interpretation from Arabic): Although this is an item of which the First Committee has been seized for a number of years, since its inclusion on the agenda of the General Assembly in 1974, it assumes exceptional importance this year. The Middle East peace conference after which the international community aspired will be the first of its kind to consider the issue. There is no doubt that there can be no room for peace in the region unless it is free of nuclear weapons and the attendant threat to the security of the region and to international security.

From the very beginning, my delegation has supported the principle of establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones throughout the world, on the strength of our belief that freeing a number of regions from nuclear weapons would work in favour of achieving the overriding objective of all, namely nuclear disarmament, and constitute a major step towards the optimal goal of the international community, namely, general and complete disarmament under international control. In addition to this, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones would lead to regional disarmament.

(Mr. Al-Nasser, Qatar)

In addition to the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East, there is the plan to turn Africa also into a nuclear-weapon-free zone. There is also the Treaty of Tlatelolco, which covers Latin America. There is also the plan for the establishment of a similar zones in south Asia and the Pacific.

The main condition for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East is the accession of all the States concerned to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. While we note that the States of the region are parties to the non-proliferation Treaty, we note that Israel is the only country that still refuses to accede to that Treaty. We also note, in this regard, that the movement of accession to that Treaty is broadening. In addition to South Africa's accession to the Treaty on 10 July 1991 and the negotiations between its Government and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) concerning safeguards, both China and France have declared their intention to accede to the Treaty and to complete the quorum of nuclear States acceding to it.

This poses the question: why does Israel hesitate to accede to that Treaty? In this regard, I wish to refer to a book published recently entitled Samson's Option, which reveals startling secrets concerning Israel's nuclear armament and the fact that its nuclear capability was put on full alert twice in 1973. This news indicates the existence of a real nuclear threat in the region that promises nothing but overkill and devastation for the inhabitants of that region and thwarts every hope for peace and security in the region. And all that has taken place in absolute secrecy. A fact which highlights the essential role of IAEA in monitoring nuclear activities in the context of the non-proliferation Treaty.

(Mr. Al-Nasser, Qatar)

Here I must point out that the Middle East Peace Conference would be the ideal framework for addressing the issue of non-proliferation and the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East.

In all our previous statements we urged that all that is needed to create such a zone in the region should be done. We have also stated that, unless there is a drastic change in the prevailing conditions in the region and unless Israel accedes to the non-proliferation Treaty, the hope of transforming the Middle East into a nuclear-weapon-free zone will be thwarted.

The international community, through the resolutions of the General Assembly, has called for the implementation of the main provisions for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones. The States of the region have also called for refraining from the production, acquisition, development or stockpiling of nuclear weapons and the placing of all nuclear installations in the region under the IAEA's safeguards regime. However, we note with regret that the annual report of the Agency contains no reference whatsoever to the diversion of nuclear material to military or weapon purposes. That report is based on the information volunteered by States in that regard. Given the rapid movement of the disarmament process towards the creation of a climate free of the stockpiling of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction as well as conventional weapons the international community as a whole hopes that there will be additional measures that would reinforce confidence, transparency and openness. The proposal to free the region of the threat of nuclear weapons should also apply to all other types of mass destruction weaponry.

(Mr. Al-Nasser, Qatar)

We hope that the General Assembly will adopt this draft resolution this year. We hope that the plan for the establishment of that nuclear-weapon-free zone will be implemented, so as to help the process of nuclear disarmament and ensure peace and security in the region.

Mr. WALKER (Jamaica): I wish to join previous delegations, Sir, in warmly congratulating you on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee and to extend my congratulations to the other officers of the Committee.

THe past two years have been the most remarkable of the post-war period. The changes which have occurred in international political relations present us with a unique opportunity to achieve meaningful progress in the field of disarmament. The cold war, accompanied by an arms race between the two super-Powers which reinforced tensions and wasted resources, is now finally at an end.

The Secretary-General, in his annual report, has included in the priorities for the disarmament agenda the following: searching for new stabilizing reductions in nuclear weapons; maintaining the regained momentum of support for the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; arresting the uncontrolled proliferation of advanced weapons of mass destruction and the relevant technologies; swiftly concluding a convention for the comprehensive prohibition of chemical weapons; and strengthening the basic obligations of the Convention on biological weapons. There is general agreement with the Secretary-General's assessment of the disarmament priorities, and in the new international climate of cooperation the process of tackling these priorities has gained momentum.

(Mr. Walker, Jamaica)

We welcome the efforts which have been made since the beginning of this year to reduce nuclear arsenals in Europe. These include the signing in July of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) by the United States and the Soviet Union and the unilateral decisions by both countries to reduce ground-based tactical nuclear weapons. We also welcome the announcement by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on 17 October of its decision to reduce certain categories of nuclear missiles. My delegation hopes that these initiatives will lead to further efforts for drastic reductions of nuclear weapons of all types by all nuclear-weapon States, leading eventually to their total elimination.

It is gratifying to note that a number of countries have recently acceded to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. We note in particular that China and France, nuclear Powers and permanent members of the Security Council, have announced that they intend to accede to that Treaty. This is welcome news. We hope that other countries will follow this example.

(Mr. Walker, Jamaica)

We are pleased to learn of the progress which the Conference on Disarmament has been making in its work on the chemical-weapons convention. We hope that every effort will be made to complete work on the convention by early next year.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/46/301) on ways and means of promoting transparency in international transfers of conventional arms. I wish to draw particular attention to the section dealing with illicit arms transfers, since these transfers are often linked to the illicit trade in drugs, and countries in my region are sometimes used as transshipment points for these illicit activities. This presents a security problem for small countries and puts a further strain on their limited resources. It is our hope that early action will be taken to implement the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report.

The circumstances which have led to the steps being taken to reduce nuclear weapons provide a similar justification and opportunity for curtailing the excessive build-up of conventional weapons. Now that confrontation has been replaced by cooperation it is proving increasingly possible to tackle a number of regional conflicts around the world and to reduce the need for many countries to be preoccupied with acquiring vast quantities of weapons. Over the years these weapons have become not only increasingly sophisticated and destructive, but also more expensive and, like non-conventional weapons, wasteful of scarce resources. These resources are required for other and more productive purposes, and all countries, both developed and developing, need to take urgent steps to reduce expenditure on both non-conventional and conventional weapons.

(Mr. Walker, Jamaica)

There are clear and compelling reasons why the reduction of military expenditure has become a matter of great urgency. A major challenge posed by the recent positive political changes is to find the resources to respond to the expectations of people everywhere as a result of these changes. Moreover, while we applaud the increasing trend towards democracy, it is more and more being appreciated that stability and social order cannot be maintained on the basis of the affluence of a few and the increasing impoverishment of the vast majority of people throughout the world.

On the basis of the current allocation of resources between military and other expenditure it would appear that there is a shortage of resources to tackle the problems resulting from the changes which have occurred and to deal with other urgent priorities. Resources are required for investment in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union if democracy is to be sustained and the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of those countries are to be realized. At the same time, firm assurances have repeatedly been given by developed countries that assistance to Eastern Europe will not result in diminishing the assistance to, and cooperation with, developing countries in dealing with the enormous economic and social problems that confront them. Moreover, the developed countries themselves need to deal with urgent social and other problems. There is obviously a need for additional resources, and logic points to a reduction in military expenditure to make a significant contribution to meeting resource requirements.

Calculations have been made as to the savings that could accrue as a result of already agreed disarmament and the additional resources that could be released as the disarmament process continues. It is obvious that account has to be taken of the considerable adjustment costs of disarmament, but on

(Mr. Walker, Jamaica)

any calculation major benefits would accrue from a reallocation of resources to productive purposes, and significant savings would become available for economic and social development.

The end of super-Power rivalry, the increasing emphasis on collective security and the efforts to solve regional conflicts mean that developing countries can now concentrate to an even greater extent on development. These countries, burdened by debt, undergoing structural adjustment programmes and unable to provide vitally needed social programmes for human development, no longer need, nor can they afford, to spend vast sums on unproductive military expenditure. Developing countries, which have the primary responsibility for their own development, should not be spending - particularly in the changed circumstances and with the pressing needs in their countries - two to three times more money on military equipment and personnel than is being spent on education and health care.

All countries, of course, have the right to defend themselves. Self-defence is a natural instinct and is recognized in Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. However, the world has indeed become a safer place, and as we look towards a new world order there should be less emphasis merely on military security. We must grasp the opportunity presented to us now to elaborate a new concept of international security, which should address development issues such as poverty, population growth, migration, debt, environmental degradation and the establishment of democratic processes and institutions. International security should no longer be limited to political and military considerations.

My delegation endorses the view expressed by the Ambassador of Brazil in his statement in the Committee on 15 October, that democracy, development and

(Mr. Walker, Jamaica)

disarmament should constitute the foundations sustaining the new structure of peace.

The concept of disarmament and development has been discussed in this forum for nearly two decades without the prospect of any real progress. Today we have the opportunity to realize the peace dividend envisaged in past discussions on disarmament and development. In the interests of peace, development and our legacy to future generations, all countries in the quest for a new world order should commit themselves to reduce armaments and military expenditure. Let us seek genuinely to make this commitment so that we may all reap the benefits of peace and prosperity.

Mr. KHAMSY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) (interpretation from French): Allow me, Sir, on behalf of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, to congratulate you warmly on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. Knowing how gifted and competent you are, I am firmly convinced that our work will be crowned with success. We offer our warm congratulations also to the other officers of the Committee.

Exactly two years ago, in this very room, I expressed the hope that, against the background of détente and rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the United States - the two militarily most powerful countries on Earth - our world would inevitably move towards a new era: an era of peace, understanding and cooperation between peoples. Since then there have been rapid and profound changes in the international situation, and already we are able to assess their impact on the security of peoples and on the process of their development. Some of the effects are positive and encouraging; others are more dangerous and uncertain.

The antagonisms and confrontations between East and West at the time of the cold war disappeared with the conclusion, in Paris last November, of the Treaty of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the ensuing dissolution of the Warsaw Pact. Thus the danger of nuclear confrontation has progressively declined. Half a dozen new States have attained independence and have joined the community of nations. In South-East Asia, peace and unity have been re-established in Cambodia through the welcome conclusion, in Paris last week, of a Treaty that put an end to several years of war and confrontation in that country. And the Conference to be convened in Madrid tomorrow, on the initiative of the United States and under the joint auspices of the Soviet Union and the United States, already promises to result in a just and honourable peace in the Middle East. For some time the

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situation in southern Africa has been developing in a manner favourable to the black people of South Africa, who have been struggling legitimately for the complete dismantlement of the apartheid system and the re-establishment in that country of a regime in which all citizens, without distinction as to race or colour, may enjoy equal democratic rights and freedoms.

The international community can only rejoice at this positive and encouraging trend in the world situation. But while the end of the cold war has led to the disappearance of a bipolar world characterized by ideological confrontation between two rival blocs, the new order which is emerging - an order that involves a monopolar world and that strives to be just and fair - has not yet been clearly defined. Uncertainties and confusion emerge here and there in various parts of the world. The gap and the contradictions between the developed North and the poor South continue to grow and to widen dangerously. Armed conflicts rooted in ethnic or religious rivalries and in the awakening of nationalities are breaking out in certain countries, seriously threatening their territorial integrity as well as peace and stability in the regions to which they belong. We are still far from having achieved a world totally safe from the threat of war or armed conflict - that world which is desired so much, a world in which it would be possible adequately to guarantee the rights and interests of all peoples, large and small.

Given the alarming proliferation of armaments of all categories - conventional, nuclear, chemical and others - the question of general and complete disarmament continues to be of concern to mankind as a whole. Negotiations at various levels - bilateral, regional and multilateral - on

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arms limitation and on disarmament are difficult and complex, and encouragement of and support for them should be accorded equal importance by the international community. It must be recognized, however, that it is at the bilateral level that appreciable progress has been achieved. The signing, in 1987, of the Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the Elimination of their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles - the INF Treaty - was a decisive turning-point in the disarmament process. And in the past year we have witnessed other achievements of outstanding - if not historic - importance, including the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START), which was signed in Moscow last July by President Mikhail Gorbachev and President George Bush. In addition, we must note the exchange by the two Powers, in December 1990, of the instruments of ratification and the protocols of two Treaties that deal with nuclear testing - namely, the partial test-ban Treaty and the Treaty on peaceful nuclear explosions. The international community welcomed warmly also the very recent announcement by President Bush of unilateral measures concerning the dismantling and withdrawal of ground-based and sea-based nuclear weapons - measures that were immediately reciprocated by President Mikhail Gorbachev, who has taken similar, and in some areas even more advanced, decisions. Furthermore, the Soviet President has decided to apply, unilaterally and immediately, a one-year moratorium on nuclear-weapons testing by his country. It is highly desirable that other nuclear Powers follow that example.

At the regional level, the Lao People's Democratic Republic welcomes the conclusion of the Treaty designed to prohibit nuclear weapons in Latin America and the Treaty that proclaims the South Pacific region to be a denuclearized

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zone. It welcomes in particular the signing, last year, of the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, which was laboriously worked out within the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, to which I have already referred. That was a historic event, which gave new - not to say decisive - impetus to the negotiations and work on all other sectors of disarmament. The Agreement of 18 July 1991 between Argentina and Brazil on the use of nuclear energy for exclusively peaceful purposes must also be regarded as one of the achievements of the regional efforts designed to put an end to the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the South American continent.

At the multilateral level, my delegation notes with satisfaction the major progress made by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva entrusted with the task of working out a convention banning the design, manufacture, acquisition, transfer and use of chemical weapons and securing the total destruction of such weapons. If the progress in the negotiations continues - and everyone hopes it will - there is good reason to believe that the final draft of this convention will be completed soon and that the instrument will be ready for signature in 1992, as planned.

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It is also comforting to learn that China and France seem to be ready to accede to the 1968 Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. This decision, if carried out, would not fail to influence the few potentially nuclear States that are still holding back to move in the same direction and thus to reinforce the universal character of the Treaty and its effectiveness. Special mention must be made of the tireless and sustained activity of the Department for Disarmament Affairs for having organized seminars, symposiums and conferences throughout the world with a view to sensitizing public opinion in each country or region as much as possible to the danger that the arms race might present and to the need to put an end to it and proceed towards disarmament.*

Last year, a certain number of delegations, including my own, raised with concern the question of weapons transfers, particularly to developing countries. Such transfers, if they are not regulated internationally, threaten to become a source of tension, conflict and destabilization in these countries, and to dangerously compromise the peace efforts of our Organization. My delegation welcomes the fact that, this year, the First Committee has seriously tackled the question and that an appropriate resolution will be adopted on this topic. It believes, however, that the regulation in question should cover not only conventional weapons but also all weapons of mass destruction and the technology for their manufacture.

Along the same line of thinking my delegation is also opposed to the establishment of military bases and of arms and munitions depots, and to the carrying out of military manoeuvres by certain Powers outside their own

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* Mr. Alpman (Turkey), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

(Mr. Khamsy, Lao People's Democratic Republic)

territory. With the end of the cold war, my delegation believes that measures in the framework of disarmament are needed to put an end to such practices.

General and complete disarmament is an arduous and long-term enterprise. In order truly to guarantee peace and security for the peoples of this world, at the current stage of negotiations on disarmament it is necessary first that countries possessing nuclear weapons should solemnly undertake - following the example of China and the Soviet Union - not to be the first to use such weapons, and that all countries without exception should adhere to the five principles of Pancha Shila. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, which has always espoused the policy of peaceful co-existence, is ready to contribute, within its modest means, to the success of our Committee's work.

Mr. GISLASON (Iceland): The history of disarmament and arms control has frequently been encapsulated in a well-known metaphor to the effect that in cold weather people put on clothes to keep warm and do not subsequently need a directive to undress when the good weather returns. The analogy is that disarmament is an inevitable phenomenon if political relationships are characterized by mutual trust rather than by fear and suspicion.

In many ways, events in recent years have proven this to be true. Greatly improved political relations between the countries which were once labelled as East and West are already reflected in the realignment of their military forces. The failed coup in the Soviet Union last August was an important juncture in this respect, as it demonstrated the tenacity of democracy and resulted in a fundamental reassessment of arms control policies by the United States, leading to President Bush's important initiative last month and President Gorbachev's reciprocation.

(Mr. Gislason, Iceland)

The informal reciprocal approach of President Bush and President Gorbachev represents a welcome departure from the traditionally cumbersome method of reaching negotiated arms control agreements. It is to be hoped that arms control without agreement is a trend which signifies the demise of the maxim "trust but verify", whereby "trust" would now predominantly symbolize the new quality of political relations in the post-cold-war era.

We particularly applaud the initiative to reduce and redeploy naval nuclear weapons, which will affect over 5,000 such devices. Iceland has on numerous occasions maintained that not only strategic but also non-strategic naval nuclear weapons should be included in the disarmament and arms-control process. We are convinced that security in northern seas will be considerably enhanced following these positive announcements by the United States and the Soviet Union.

Furthermore, current proposals on strategic nuclear weapons may provide the basis for follow-up negotiations on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). There is no doubt that present political conditions provide a unique opportunity for cuts in strategic nuclear weapons that go well beyond the reductions prescribed by the START Treaty. Negotiated agreements will continue to be a useful and necessary framework for solving various and often complex problems in the field of disarmament and arms control, particularly such global issues as nuclear proliferation and chemical and biological weapons.

The danger of the further proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the most ominous security challenges of the 1990s. The exposure of the vast Iraqi nuclear programme is a case in point. It demonstrates the need to ensure the implementation of the non-proliferation Treaty through effective and active

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verification. Iceland welcomes the recent accession of new members to the Treaty. The announced intentions of France and China to accede are particularly important. We are confident that Estonia and Latvia will follow the example of Lithuania and become parties to the Treaty.

In the present political context, a comprehensive nuclear-test ban is primarily, though not exclusively, desirable in order to strengthen the non-proliferation regime. It would encourage all States, including non-signatories to the non-proliferation Treaty, not to test nuclear weapons. It could thereby restrain the so-called threshold States from developing and acquiring nuclear weapons.

The Geneva negotiations on chemical weapons have progressed to the point where a successful conclusion seems imminent. We are confident that, while substantive issues remain to be solved, a verifiable chemical weapons convention will soon be realized.

The Third Review Conference of the Parties to the biological weapons Convention was recently brought to a successful conclusion. The agreed confidence-building measures make a significant contribution towards greater transparency and openness, which can strengthen the Convention. Similarly, the agreement on establishing an ad hoc group of experts to examine the scientific and technical aspects of possible verification measures was a positive development.

I would like to join previous speakers who have referred to the growing international acceptance of a broader concept of security encompassing military, political, economic, social and ecological factors. This wider perception of security and the awareness of various interdependencies have

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been attained through a gradual evolutionary process. It should enable us to deal with new global security challenges in a comprehensive manner.

The broad definition of security includes risks to the marine environment through actual and potential accidents involving nuclear reactors at sea. At present there are mainly three sources of radioactive materials which can affect the marine environment: the disposal at sea of low-level solidified radioactive waste; the discharge of low-level radioactive liquid effluent; and maritime accidents and losses involving radioactive materials.

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We need to devote equal attention to all three elements, which have hitherto been subject to the Contracting Parties to the London Dumping Convention as well as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulations; also in a regional context the Paris Convention for the Prevention of Marine Pollution from Land-Based Sources. We are however of the view that insufficient attention has been given to accidents involving seaborne nuclear-power reactors, which are only to a limited extent covered by international safety codes.

Currently there are close to 600 nuclear-power reactors in ships and submarines around the world. These reactors - which should be regarded as mobile nuclear-power plants - greatly outnumber the approximately 420 nuclear-power plants which have been built on land.

Incidents and accidents involving seaborne nuclear reactors have been numerous. Most of them have resulted from collisions, fires, groundings, explosions, equipment failures, weather conditions or floodings, and some have been serious. Reports indicate that at least nine nuclear reactors are lying on the bottom of the ocean.

Nuclear submarine accidents in recent years are a stark reminder of the possibly disastrous consequences which could befall nations that depend on the living resources of the sea. The release of radioactive material from a reactor plant to the marine environment, particularly in shallow waters, poses significant risks of contamination to fisheries and spawning grounds. The total loss of a nuclear-power reactor would compound the danger.

Iceland bases its economy mainly on coastal fishing and the subsequent export of commodities and we already know that even the faintest suspicion of radioactive contamination can affect international markets. Following Soviet

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submarine accidents in Northern waters in the late 1980s, there were immediate inquiries from major buyers of Icelandic fish products as to whether fish stocks had been affected. Such questions were asked despite the long distances involved. Consequently, we have to recognize and respect these sensitivities, particularly as far as radiation is concerned.

Consideration of measures to reduce the likelihood and impact of nuclear accidents involving seaborne reactors began in the 1950s in parallel with the development of nuclear propulsion for seagoing ships. the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) specifying safety recommendations applicable to nuclear merchant ships, was signed in London in 1960. The IMO adopted and published the Code of Safety for Nuclear Merchant Ships in 1981. The process of keeping this code up to date has now been initiated as a result of a Nordic initiative at IAEA in 1990.

Following the Three Mile Island and Chernobyl accidents, there has been increasing concern about the adequacy of emergency planning and preparedness in the event of disasters. The Convention on the Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency entered into force in 1986 and 1987 respectively. Since 1989, IAEA, which is the depository of these international Conventions, has operated an emergency response system to receive and disseminate information and to coordinate assistance. Both apply to accidents at sea.

Thus the international community has established various parameters regarding the operation of nuclear-power reactors at sea but shortcomings still remain. Whereas there exist safety guidelines for all nuclear-power reactors on land, such guidelines for nuclear reactors at sea are only

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applicable to the relatively few civilian nuclear-powered ships. Most seaborne nuclear reactors are not subject to any safety codes. Both IAEA and IMO have responsibilities which are limited to the peaceful uses of nuclear energy by virtue of their statutes but which do not concern naval vessels.

Recent accidents involving seaborne nuclear reactors clearly demonstrate the urgency of assessing the necessity and feasibility of agreeing on effective international measures to improve reactor safety and avoid reactor accidents which may jeopardize the ecosystem and living natural resources. The devastating consequences of a Chernobyl at sea must be avoided. The Government of Iceland believes that it would be constructive if the Secretary-General, perhaps through a group of qualified governmental experts, would undertake a study with a view to identifying the risks to the marine environment posed by possible accidents involving seaborne nuclear reactors, assessing such accidents and defining measures to reduce the risk involved. An explanatory memorandum on this suggestion will shortly be distributed in this forum.

Mr. ALMUAKKAF (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (interpretation from Arabic): The Moroccan delegation has already spoken on behalf of the Arab Maghreb including Mauritania, Morocco, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and Tunisia, but permit me to add the following to what was said in that statement. I should like to convey to Ambassador Robert Mroziewicz of Poland our warm congratulations on his election to the chairmanship of the First Committee at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly. I am convinced that he will contribute to the success of the Committee's work in the light of his experience and skills in disarmament.

(Mr. Almuakkaf, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

Of course, I should also like to thank his predecessor, Ambassador Jai Pratap Rana who conducted the proceedings of the Committee in such an exemplary fashion. I should also like to convey our warm congratulations to the other officers of the Committee.

A climate of understanding and détente in international relations that is unprecedented in history prevails in the world today. Those relations have improved and developed positively between States which until only yesterday regarded each other with distrust and suspicion. International relations have also seen political changes and changes in the security and disarmament field. This has led to positive developments with regard to resolving problems and conflicts through understanding and coordination rather than hostility and confrontation.

My delegation welcomes the rapprochement between East and West and the developments which are taking place in the world today through bilateral and multilateral negotiations that aim at reaching agreements on the elimination of nuclear weapons totally and without exception or discrimination. That will make it possible for us to spare the world the horror of nuclear weapons which continue to be manufactured and stockpiled in great numbers throughout the world.

We are witnessing today truly important historic events. We would simply hope that these hopes will not be dashed and that our optimism will not be mere illusion because we do note that, side by side with all the developments which engender optimism, the easing of tension and the effective and bold measures taken by the two super-Powers in the context of a new perspective of international security that allows for reductions in nuclear weapons, there

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still exists the fact that the arsenals of the nuclear-weapon States still have the capability of destroying the world many times over.

This fact makes it necessary for those States to seriously consider the threat this poses to international peace and security and realize that there is a need for the political will to eliminate totally all those weapons.

My delegation welcomes the concrete progress achieved in the negotiations on the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) and the reduction in the strategic nuclear weapons of the two super-Powers that such progress leads to. My country welcomes also every proposal that aims at the total elimination of nuclear weapons and the halting of the arms race.

Speaking of nuclear weapons must lead to the problem of proliferation. My country wishes to stress the extreme importance of the early conclusion of a treaty on a total nuclear test ban and hopes that the nuclear-weapon States will have the necessary political will to keep their promises and hasten to adopt the necessary measures to end their nuclear tests which, between the signing of the partial-test-ban Treaty in 1963 and the end of 1989, numbered 1,271 recorded tests, as mentioned in PTB Conference Room Paper 5. Such measures would strengthen the current efforts which aim at total and complete disarmament and the prevention of the development and production of more advanced or entirely new nuclear weapons. Moreover, the halting of tests would work in favour of sparing the international community and spare it from the environmental and health hazards posed by nuclear explosions.

Therefore, we must take action to achieve the principal objective we all aim at, namely, the early conclusion of a comprehensive test-ban treaty under effective international control, in consonance with the United Nations

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objectives. It is our conviction that this would be the best practical way of halting and reversing the nuclear-arms race. Therefore, my country will continue to urge the pursuance of this process until the ultimate goal of freeing the world of the horrors of such weapons is achieved.

My country reiterates its resolve to work for the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in all parts of the world with a view to ensuring the emergence of a world that would be totally free of such weapons and the strengthening of international peace and security in the light of the specific characteristics of each region.

It is on this basis that my delegation supports the 1964 Cairo Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) which called for a nuclear-weapon-free Africa.

My delegation also welcomes President Hosni Mubarak's call for a nuclear-weapon-free Middle East. However, in the teeth of all these calls by the international community for nuclear-weapon-free zones, the two racist regimes in South Africa and in occupied Palestine continue to carry out nuclear-weapon tests and exchange information on nuclear programmes. It is these two racist regimes that obstruct the ridding of the African continent and the Middle East of this nuclear nightmare. The destruction of the nuclear weapons of these two racist regimes and the termination of their nuclear weapons development and manufacture programmes is a sine qua non for making Africa and the Middle East nuclear-weapon-free zones.

While my delegation hopes that the world will take the necessary action and strictly abide by the principle of non-proliferation it notes that certain nuclear-weapon States continue to flout that principle and give direct and

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indirect assistance to these two regimes in a manner that enables them to continue to produce nuclear weapons and develop further their collaboration, in their nuclear capacities and their delivery systems.

It is disturbing to note the reports of The Washington Post on 27 September 1990 and 27 October 1991 which have been confirmed by the NBC television network, regarding the joint venture by the South African regime and the Zionist entity in the development of medium-range missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads.

These two racist regimes are engaged in developing the means of intimidating neighbouring States. The Zionist entity's continued refusal to abide by the General Assembly's urging to place its nuclear installations and facilities under the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) safeguards regime is known to all. That regime continues to develop and test medium-range missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads to its targets. One of those missiles fell near the second largest city in my country. This, of course, exposed the safety and security of my country to grave dangers and showed complete disregard for the peace and security not only of the region but of the world.

The fact that these two regimes possess nuclear weapons not only threatens peace and security throughout the Middle East but throughout the world. This was attested to by an article in The New York Times of 20 October this year when it reviewed Hirsch's new book The Samson Option, which states that the number of nuclear weapons possessed by Israel far exceeds what the United States Government previously believed. The book also shows that one of Israel's potential principal targets was the Soviet Union. All this in

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addition to the statements made by the Israeli nuclear technician, Vanunu, to the Sunday Times of London, some time ago.

One cannot speak of disarmament without mentioning conventional weapons. The world has witnessed many armed conflicts since the end of World War II in which conventional weapons claimed millions of lives. A great deal of money has been spent on the acquisition and development of such weapons. My delegation believes that it is high time that this matter was addressed seriously and calls upon all States to abide by the principles of the United Nations Charter and refrain from the threat or the use of force and interference in the internal affairs of other States. At the same time we must make further efforts to halt this fevered race.

In this respect my delegation welcomes the recent agreement between the two blocs to reduce their conventional forces in Europe. We welcome, too, the efforts being made in the context of the various conferences on Security and Cooperation in Europe. Proceeding from my country's belief in the need to strengthen international peace and security and the need to prevent the human race from chemical and biological warfare, my country hastened to sign the 1925 Geneva Protocol for the Prohibition of the Use in War of Asphyxiating, Poisonous or Other Gases, and of Bacteriological Methods of Warfare.

My country also participated in all the Conferences on this subject and we state now that we support the need for a total ban on the development, production, stockpiling and use of chemical weapons and on their eventual destruction. We also believe that current stockpiles should be under international control until an agreement is reached on their destruction. My delegation also affirms its full adherence to the Convention on the

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Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

We also believe that there is need to reaffirm paragraph 45 of the programme of action included in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly on Disarmament which categorizes chemical weapons with nuclear weapons under the heading of weapons of mass destruction while giving priority to the destruction of nuclear weapons.

The Mediterranean should become a nuclear-weapon-free zone and the facilities of all the region's countries should be under international control, without discrimination. All the region's countries should undertake to abide by international agreements.

Another question which warrants our special attention is the arms race in outer space. The possibilities of using outer space for military purposes are a source of concern to the whole world as they amount to a further escalation of an arms race that would have grave consequences for international peace and security.

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Given the fact that outer space is the heritage of all mankind, my country's view is that man's access to exploraton of outer space must be exploited for the benefit of all mankind as a whole and that space should be reserved solely for peaceful purposes. In order to avoid the erection of further obstacles in the way of disarmament, we call for the prohibition of the militarization of outer space which should be used for humanitarian, peaceful and scientific purposes. To use outer space for hostile purposes, is to aggravate the tendency towards its militarization in a manner that would be sure to threaten international peace and security and step up the arms race. It is common knowledge that the Israelis have launched missiles and spy satellites into outer space to spy on African and Arab countries.

My delegation also stresses the extreme importance of issue of naval armaments and naval disarmament. Today, the oceans and seas of the world bristle with weapons of mass destruction that are included in the armaments of submarine and surface vessels alike. This creates tension, impedes peaceful maritime activities which include transport and communications, affects adversely international trade and the world economy and threatens the peace and security of coastal States. My country, therefore, has consistently supported all international and regional efforts, in the United Nations and other international and regional organizations, to eliminate such weapons.

Our world has the capability to provide better human life for all mankind. It also has the means of wiping life off the face of the planet. If our world was able to achieve disarmament, this would create the necessary climate that is indispensable for the prosperity of the world's peoples.

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It is indeed painful to find that some States, particularly of the developing world, tend to devote their natural and human resources to the acquisition and stockpiling of armaments, to weapons research and the acquisition of new types of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction at the expense of some of their most pressing social, humanitarian and development needs, thus leaving their peoples at the mercy of ignorance, disease, poverty, homlessness and hunger.

As an African country, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya pays very particular attention to the issue of nuclear and toxic wastes which are dumped by some nuclear States and their companies in the lands of developing countries, especially in Africa. Such wastes are highly detrimental to the environment and to people alike. We support the measures proposed by the Organization of African Unity and second the International Atomic Energy Agency's condemnation of such practices. We also support all the efforts and programmes of other international bodies in this respect and call upon this . Committee to take practical steps to remedy the situation.

My delegation attaches particular importance to the problem of verification which is essential for the achievement of any real progress in the field of disarmament. Here, my delegation wishes to commend the Secretary-General's reports on the United Nations role in the area of verification and the need to apply the rules of verification without exception or discrimination.

Mindful of the need to promote the principle of transparency in the area of arms transfers of all kinds and quantities, my delegation supports in principle the development of a conventional weapons transfer register.

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However, such a register should include, in addition to conventional weapons, all other types of armaments, especially those of mass destruction.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate its belief in the importance of the United Nations role in the maintenance of international peace and security and attaches great importance to the Organization's unremitting efforts to achieve disarmament. By the same token, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the Secretary-General for the role he has played, for his efforts and, especially, for his valuable reports in this connection, We should also like to thank Mr. Yasushi Akashi, Under-Secretary-General for Disarmament Affairs, whose reports have called upon the international community to contribute further to the Organization's efforts to discharge its responsibilities in the area of disarmament. We agree with him that research centres would contribute to the expansion of our horizons in the area of disarmament and, thereby, contribute to the consolidation of international peace and security.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.